PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS PLANNING PROCESS

James R. Hanchey

Institute for Water Research (Army)
Fort Belvoir, Virginia

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This report discusses the design, implementation and management of public involvement programs as integral parts of the Corps of Engineers water resources planning process. The approach to program development suggested relies on several key concepts; first that planning should be viewed as consisting of several sequential stages, each of which has a definable output and therefore represents an implicit or explicit decision point; second, that public involvement programs can and should be approached on a stage-by-stage

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basis; third, that there should be public checkpoints at the end of each stage to provide the public and the reviewing elements of the Corps with citizen input as to the adequacy and responsiveness of the planning to date; fourth, that these public checkpoints are not in themselves adequate, but are only the culmination of active participation during each planning stage by limited segments of the public; and fifth, that decision-making responsive to public concerns requires the explicit consideration of public input before key decisions are made at each state. The report includes chapters on developing public involvement programs, forums for obtaining citizen input, guidelines for developing public information programs, monitoring and evaluation of programs, and staff organization and budgeting for public involvement activities.

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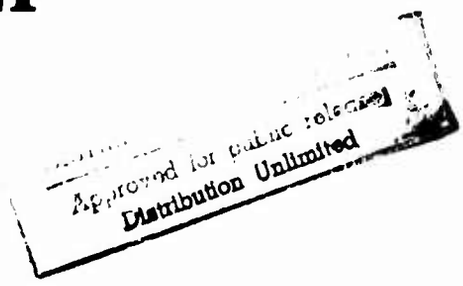
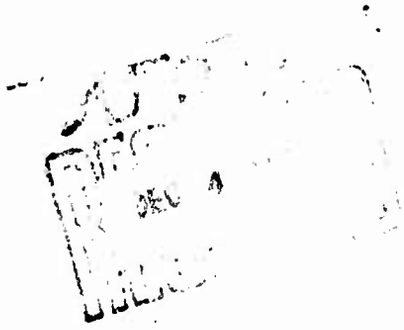
by

JAMES R. HANCHEY





U. S.Army Engineer Institute for Water Resources
Kingman Building
Fort Belvoir, Virginia 22060

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INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL IS TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC GUIDANCE AND SUGGESTIONS TO CORPS OF ENGINEERS FIELD PLANNING PERSONNEL IN THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS AS INTEGRAL PARTS OF CORPS PLANNING PROCESSES.

The primary focus of the manual is on public involvement in Congressionally authorized feasibility studies. Public involvement is also required in studies conducted under special continuing authorities and guidance for these studies, to the extent that it differs from Congressionally authorized studies, is presented in the appendix.

THIS MANUAL WAS DEVELOPED UNDER THE FOLLOWING ASSUMPTIONS.

First, the emphasis which the Corps has placed on public involvement in planning over the past several years will continue. ***Second,*** Corps field planners are committed to the value of public involvement and desire specific guidance on how to make it more effective. ***Third,*** the guidance must be realistic and practical. It must take into consideration the time, financial and staff limitations which all districts have. ***Fourth,*** public involvement is not complicated — indeed, talking with people about things that concern them is a very natural human process. Unfortunately, in recent years some very talented behavioral and social scientists have tried to impose too much structure and some rather sophisticated techniques on the simple art of communication. Planners have begun to question whether they have the skills to design, implement and manage public involvement programs. They do.

A. A Framework for Corps Public Involvement Programs.

There are a number of concepts which should guide public involvement in Corps planning.

1. The public and the Corps.

The role of the public in Corps planning programs is to provide timely information to the Corps so that water resources plans will, to the maximum extent possible, respond to public needs and preferences. On the other hand, the Corps has the responsibility of providing timely information to the public, so that those choosing to participate can do so with a relatively full and complete understanding of the issues, opportunities, and consequences associated with a study. The Corps and elected and appointed officials retain the major decision making authority. They are accountable. They must balance the needs and preferences of many constituent groups with each other and with the other technical and political elements which influence the selection of a plan. It follows that public involvement is basically an advisory process.

2. Public involvement models.

There is no single best way to involve the public in planning. Each study is "situation specific", likely to involve unique technical, political and

economic elements which will influence Corps/ public interaction. Some studies will require intensive interaction in a variety of ways; other will not. One of the questions to be addressed in this manual is how to look at each situation to assess the type and intensity of program that will be needed.

3. The "Cumulative Curve" of public involvement.

Public interest in a study matures over time; it is only born when the investigation is initiated.

> ". . . Initially, only a very small proportion of the population likely to be affected by a planning project will recognize that (a) their interests are affected and (b) the agency will respond to their actions. This results from the very general statement of the issues at the outset, and a combination of a low information flow and low level of credibility of many planning agencies.
>
> As the project proceeds, issues become more clearly defined, more people recognize that they have a direct or indirect stake in the outcome, information flows (from agencies, media, interest groups, grapevines, etc.) increase, and the credibility of at least some of these sources of information rises.
>
> Given a decision which the active public generally understands and accepts, the level of citizen involvement generally declines as other issues compete for public attention. However, if the decision is not understood, or is seen as unacceptable by many, a further escalation of citizen involvement, usually in the form of protest, can be expected."[1]

While public involvement must start early in the planning process, there is likely to be minimal participation at first. Inasmuch as citizen participation will grow throughout the study, the public involvement program itself must be cumulative. People will become involved at different times. They must be acquainted with what has already occurred as well as given an opportunity to participate from that point on. The extent to which the planner is successful in compiling a record of citizen participation will largely determine the amount of pressure from late participants who want to restart the planning process with discussions of previously settled issues. The cumulative nature of participation should also be recognized in public involvement program budgets: sufficient funds must be held in reserve for a study's later stages when participation is likely to be greatest.

4. Public involvement and planning.

If public involvement is to be meaningful to the public, planners, and decision-makers, opportunity for citizen involvement must be timely. It should build throughout the active phases of planning and peak at several study checkpoints where critical choices and decisions are made. This concept is discussed in greater detail in Chapter I.

5. Who is the public?

ER 1105-2-800 defines "public" as ". . . any affected or interested non-Corps of Engineers entity . . . other Federal, regional, state and local government entities and officials; public and private organizations; and individuals."[2] Practically, the participating public is likely to be organized. "Power in our society (i.e., the power to influence decisions) rests primarily in organized groups, rather than in individuals."[3] Thus, the primary (but not exclusive) Corps target for public involvement will normally be organized groups rather than the mass or general public. There are several additional reasons.

First, the majority of the study area population does not have sufficient knowledge of water resources, the problems involved in their management, or the ways in which these problems or management programs affect them personally to decide among or even be sufficiently interested in various alternative courses of action proposed. ***Second,*** it is unrealistic to expect each person to be greatly concerned about and actively involved in each problem he perceives. As public involvement intensifies in a variety of public planning programs, the individual citizen must make choices for his involvement. Water resources planning frequently gets low priority.

Third, there are practical difficulties in involving large numbers of people. Given time, financial and staffing constraints, the planner should attempt to make the most efficient and productive use of his resources. Energies expended on efforts to involve the mass public, with resultant limited participation, would not appear to be efficient and productive.

This is not to say that the mass public should or can be ignored. Indeed, the Corps has a responsibility to provide widely distributed public information so that individuals can, should they choose to do so, become involved.

However, a good public involvement program is one which brings out all the real issues concerning a particular study and insures that these issues are given full consideration. To a large extent, this can be accomplished by directing public involvement efforts to a limited, organized segment of the public: interest groups, relevant governmental agencies and officials at all levels, key citizens (sometimes referred to as community influentials), and individual citizens who are significantly impacted by any of the alternatives under consideration. Initially, this group of people is likely to be small, for there are a limited number of people who are interested in relatively general discussion of planning objectives, of problems, and potential solutions. As alternative solutions become better defined, and their impacts made known, more and more people will become interested — for they can see how they would benefit or be adversely affected. The Corps' responsibility is to seek out these groups and individuals, for they may not respond to the more general information communicated to the mass public. There are a number of methods for identifying key publics. These are quite well covered in Willeke's ***Identification of Publics in Water Resources Planning.***[4]

In short, the Corps should focus its involvement techniques (those requiring two-way communication with feedback) on organized groups, agencies, elected officials, and significantly affected individuals, and should rely on the mass media to inform and educate the general public.

B. Organization of the Manual.

This manual has five chapters. ***Chapter I*** offers guidance on the design, implementation and management of public involvement programs as part of the Corps planning and decision-making processes. It is the key chapter. ***Chapter II*** discusses forums and methods for involving the public. ***Chapter III*** provides suggestions on the public information aspects of programs — how to inform and educate both the mass public and organized groups. ***Chapter IV*** provides guidance on how to monitor and evaluate public involvement program effectiveness. ***Chapter V*** discusses field organization, staffing and budgeting for public involvement. Appendix A includes a discussion of public involvement in the continuing authorities program. Also included is a bibliography of reports, studies and other material which might be useful to planners in designing, implementing and managing their public involvement programs.

CHAPTER I

INVOLVING THE PUBLIC IN PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS MUST BE INTEGRAL PARTS OF THE OVERALL PLANNING PROCESS AND THEY MUST BUILD TO PROVIDE FOR FULL CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS IN THE MAKING OF KEY STUDY DECISIONS.

A public involvement program is not an end; rather, it is a means to an end: a plan which reflects and combines public values and preferences with professional knowledge and experience. Public involvement programs must be designed, implemented and managed within the context of the planning and decision-making processes — which requires that the elements of those processes be clearly specified before public involvement program design proceeds. Thus, this chapter first addresses these planning and decision-making processes and then describes how public involvement can be related to them.

This approach runs the risk of oversimplifying planning, which is a highly technical and complicated process. However, effective public involvement requires that planning be described in a way that is understandable to non-professionals with varying degrees of knowledge about the way the Corps does business. If the planner accepts this constraint, the guidance will be useful. This approach relies on a careful examination of the objectives of planning as it moves through successive stages and a clear delineation of the key decision points which are reached as planning progresses from one stage to another. The recognition that there are key decision points, even though some may be more implicit than explicit, enables one to approach the development of a public involvement program on a stage-by-stage basis.

A. *The Stages of Planning*

The Corps' planning process is divided into three stages by specifying three points for monitoring study progress and scope (by consolidating interagency coordination through formal review and by negotiating intra-agency consensus through checkpoint conferences). The three stages are: (1) the development of a Plan of Study, (2) the development of intermediate plans, and (3) the development of detailed plans.[5] Each stage has specific study outputs that are intended to provide for sequential review of study progress and to serve as a basis for making decisions about the nature, scope and direction of the study effort. During each stage, four functional planning tasks are carried out: problem identification, formulation of alternatives, impact assessment, and evaluation. Practically, of course, each of these tasks receives different emphasis depending on the planning stage. The important point is that the tasks are iterative throughout the planning process, and if public involvement is focused on the tasks rather than the stages, integration and consideration of public comments becomes exceedingly difficult.

1. Public involvement and the stages of planning. While each stage involves the conduct of common tasks, the required planning output from each stage and the nature of the decisions made at the end of each stage are sufficiently different to suggest that both the form of the public involvement program and the definition of relevant publics who should be involved in each stage may also be different. In other words, public involvement should be planned for on a stage-by-stage basis rather than looking at it in relation to the study as a whole. Moreover, the transition from one stage to the next, with the requirement for clearly specified, reviewable outputs at each stage provides a convenient opportunity for ending one phase of a public involvement program and beginning the next.

Development of public involvement programs can best be approached in two parts — the first concerned with the involvement of various seg-

ments of the public *during* the various stages and which necessarily occurs more or less continuously throughout the time allotted for each stage, and the second concerned with broad public review of the results of each stage.

2. Public involvement during stages of planning. Providing the opportunity for public review of planning accomplishments at the end of each stage through public meetings is not, by itself, meaningful public involvement. The public must also have the opportunity to participate ***during*** each planning stage. The major objective of public involvement during these stages is to improve the two-way information flow on which planning is based. It requires informal, sometimes time-consuming dialogue between the planners and the public. Because fewer people are interested in the intricacies and details of planning, the target audience for involvement will usually be smaller than for public meetings - interest groups, government organizations and directly affected citizens. While the general nature of the public involvement program is the same during each planning stage, dialogue among participants, there will be differences in the forums for involvement and the intensity of interaction with the public as the plan moves through successive stages. This is due both to the "cumulative curve" of involvement and to the different decisions that must be made at each stage.

a. ***Stage One . . . Plan of Study.***

Plans of study have traditionally served primarily as internal management documents — plans which specify the study's intended scope and direction, budgets, and work schedules. They now have a broader purpose — to provide for initial iterations of the four functional planning tasks to obtain a preliminary view of what the overall study will involve. This requires that public involvement be an important part of the first stage of planning.

Important characteristics of the Plan of Study stage are that it is exploratory in nature and that it aims for comprehensiveness with regard to identification and definition of public concerns, issues, problems and constraints. With the emphasis on identification and definition, rather than resolution, it follows that public involvement should be directed towards insuring the articulation of a wide variety of viewpoints so that they can be considered in the planning process. There is no need to resolve any conflicting views or preferences.

Because of the short time frame for completing the Plan of Study and the abstract nature of some of the major concerns of the planner during this stage, such as community goals and planning objectives, it is difficult to achieve effective broad scale participation. Only a small number of people want to commit time to broad issues and concepts. For these reasons, the public involvement objectives during the Plan of Study stage are relatively modest, the target public is limited, and the range of effective forums for participation is narrow.

(1) ***involvement objectives.*** There are three. The ***first*** is to obtain information which is useful in directing the study: e.g., identifi-

cation of problems which should be addressed, issues to be considered, objectives and goals which are important, alternatives which should be investigated. The ***second*** is to obtain information about the political, social and economic setting of the area (including how citizens organize to influence public issues) which will be useful in designing and implementing a public involvement program for succeeding stages. The ***third*** is to begin to prepare both the public and the agency for more intensive involvement which will follow.

(2) ***target public.*** There is the "participating public" and the "information audience". The participating public is that relatively small number of people, from different interests, who will be directly contacted for information. These people are normally those who have had a continuing interest in water or related matters, such as agencies, special interest groups or those who have a problem or need orientation such as residents of a flood plain. The information audience is the general or mass public, and information programs must be started early to make people aware of the study, to facilitate their self-determination of study interest, to provide awareness of opportunities for involvement, and to begin to prepare people for participation in the broader public review at the end of this stage.

(3) ***available forums for involvement.*** Since the major objectives are to ***obtain*** information rather than to seek any issue resolution, small meetings or interviews with individual interests would seem most appropriate. Planners should be looking for in-depth discussions. Larger meetings may not be so appropriate, because they probably would not provide adequate opportunity for each individual to express himself fully. Other potential forums to obtain information include such techniques as questionnaires. However, they have usually not been useful at the early stages of planning because the value of the information obtained depends on the knowledge of the respondents, and in the early study stages, the level of knowledge is usually low.

b. ***Stage Two. Development of Intermediate Plans.***

During this second planning stage, the focus begins to shift from problem identification to the formulation and preliminary testing of alternative solutions. The focus of the public involvement program likewise shifts from collecting information on problems and issues to working with agencies, interest groups and affected publics to insure that the range of alternatives being considered adequately respond to the problems, address all the significant issues, explore the ways in which the alternatives affect the various interests, and try to reduce the number of alternatives which will be carried forward into the third planning stage. While conflicts are likely to emerge during this stage, their resolution is not as critical as will be during the final stage of planning. Indeed, the balancing of interests, compromises and potential trade-offs are usually not possible until the planners begin detailed assessments.

More people are likely to become interested as they see their concerns addressed. The potentially interested and affected publics can be more clearly defined, and they can be specifically invited to participate.

At this stage, the planner will be trying to develop a range of alternative solutions which address the identified problems and issues, and he will be trying to assess the soundness of each alternative. To do this, he needs comments from the public on the extent to which the range of alternatives address the significant issues and concerns, the acceptability of the predicted impacts of each alternative, suggestions that would lead to modification of alternatives to increase their acceptability, and whether any alternative might be so generally un-

acceptable to the community that it should now be dropped from further consideration. To supply these comments, the public needs information from the planner on how the alternatives were developed, what each is intended to do, generally who will benefit and how, who and what might be adversely affected and how, what might be done to mitigate some of these adverse effects, and some presentation of the key Corps planning criteria.

(1) ***Involvement objectives.*** The district's purpose during this stage is to provide forums in which interested and affected people can explore the implications of each alternative in terms of their major concerns; become aware of the various trade-offs and compromises which are implicit in the selection of one alternative over another; express their views as to whether the range of alternatives is adequate; provide suggestions concerning modifications which might improve an alternative's desirability; and indicate which alternatives are clearly unacceptable.

(2) ***target public.*** The target broadens. Rather than relying on selected groups and individuals in any interest area (as in planning stage one), all indentifiable groups in each interest area should be directly encouraged to participate. Emphasis should be given to identifying and encouraging the participation of potentially affected publics, such as residents of an area where a reservoir might be constructed.

(3) ***available forums.*** Involvement in planning stage two requires interaction among various interests as well as between the public and the planner. If people are going to work effectively together in stage three, understanding of each other's positions and interests must be built in stage two. This type of dialogue is usually best achieved in the moderate-size meetings such as workshops (see Chapter II).

c. ***Stage Three. Development of Final Plans.***

This final planning stage is concerned with the detailed development of a small number of alternative plans, their assessment, modification and evaluation — leading to the recommendation of one plan. The focus of the planning effort shifts from alternative formulation (although alternatives are continually being modified) to impact assessment and evaluation. Likewise, the nature of the public involvement effort changes. This is the most intensive period for involvement, because each alternative can be described in very real terms as to how it might specifically affect various interests. As a result, interest heightens and conflicts among interest increase. Because of the smaller number of alternatives under consideration as a result of screening out unpromising or unacceptable alternatives, and the fact that the decisions to be made at the end of the stage are more immediate and easier to understand, the nature of the planning process itself should be more easily understood by the public.

It should then be easier to obtain public involvement: the participants will almost "self-select". In any event, with the impacts of the various alternatives reasonable known, the planner will find it much easier to identify potentially interested and affected publics. It follows that the public involvement program, measured in terms of numbers of participants and diversity of interest groups, will be greatest and broadest during this final stage of planning.

The planner should be trying to develop detailed information on the nature, magnitude and incidence of the effects of the alternatives and to assess and put into perspective the public's evaluation of those effects. The planner will attempt to modify alternatives to eliminate or mitigate adverse effects and attempt to negotiate compromises and trade-offs in order to develop support for the decisions to be made. To accomplish this, he needs information from the public on remaining issues that have not been fully addressed, on effects which the public perceives might have been overlooked, on the adequacy of the assessment of effects, on the acceptability of certain effects, on the potential compromises and trade-offs that might be acceptable, and on indications of preferences for various alternatives. To supply this information, the public will need from the planner detailed descriptions of each alternative, of the nature, magnitude and incidence of the effects, on the feasible modifications which are available to eliminate or mitigate adverse effects, and on the principal criteria that will be used to select the preferred plan for recommendation.

(1) ***involvement objectives.*** The district's purpose is to provide forums in which interested and affected publics can obtain detailed information concerning the implications of each alternative in terms of their major interests, can contribute information useful in determining the short and long term consequences and incidence of effects, can suggest mitigation measures and modifications which would increase the acceptability of alternatives, might negotiate inter-interest group compromises and trade-offs, and can express preferences with regard to different alternatives.

(2) ***target publics.*** The relevant publics are the broadest of any planning stage. All directly affected individuals and concerned interest groups should be specifically invited to participate. Emphasis should be given to those segments of the public who are likely to bear significant costs such as, potential relocatees and to those individuals and interest groups who are perceived to be sufficiently interested in the final recommendations to use other means to influence decisions.

(3) ***available forums.*** Involvement requires intensive and regular interaction among various interests as well as between the public and the Corps. There are several appropriate forums. Early in Stage Three, moderate-size meetings such as workshops would be effective. During the latter phases of the stage, when the impact assessment is substantially completed and when the major conflicting interests can be identified, small meetings for the purpose of negotiation could be critical. Citizen committees are also useful forums during stage three (see Chapter II for more detailed discussion of these forums).

2. ***Public involvement at the end of the planning stages.*** The major objective of public involvement activities at the end of each stage of planning is to provide the public with an opportunity to review the results of planning up to this point and to provide the planner and other decision-makers with information which will be useful in making the decisions necessary before proceeding to the next planning stage (or, in the case of the end of the planning process, for making the final recommendation). In some sense, public involvement at each of these three points becomes a "public checkpoint" — citizen input into inter-agency and intra-agency review.

If these public checkpoints are to be viewed by the public as providing real opportunity to influence decisions, it is essential that the tendency to make binding decisions be avoided in Corps checkpoint conferences (which occur prior to public meetings). While it is true that the active involvement of citizens during the planning prior to checkpoint conferences will provide decision-makers with a feel for public views and preferences, decisions should be regarded as tentative, subject to revision as a result of input received during public checkpoint meetings. Public review prior to major decision points introduces an important degree of accountability to the public into the planning process, helping insure that public involvement is both integrated into and has influence on that process.

These public review checkpoints require forums that provide the opportunity for participation by fairly large numbers of people representing diverse public interests — in short, a large meeting of publics. These forums can take many possible forms, including traditional public meetings, informal group meetings, or even locally sponsored meetings. The key criteria are that they be widely publicized, open to everyone, in adequate facilities in easily accessible locations, and providing the opportunity for everyone to make statements. These different forums are discussed in more detail in Chapter II.

Given the major objective of public involvement at the end of each stage (public review and comment before decisions are made which will guide the next stage of planning), there are several factors to be considered in designing this part of the public involvement program.

***First,* these public checkpoints are to provide opportunity for every interested citizen to participate, whether or not he has joined in early working sessions with other citizens.**

Thus, some broad scale dissemination of information is required. Public information programs are discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

Second,* substantive information describing the results of planning should be distributed by direct mailings to identified groups or individuals who are interested or affected, and made available in readily accessible locations.** Inasmuch as the public checkpoints are to focus on the decisions or recommendations that are to be made, the substantive information should clearly state the decisions that are to be considered and the district's tentative position with regard to those decisions. It has been argued that the district should not state its position, however tentative, at such meetings lest the public feel that it is merely being asked to give its stamp of approval. However, if it is accepted that public checkpoint meetings are not the sum total of the district's public involvement program and that other forums for involvement are provided during each planning phase, then it should be clear to the public that the district's tentative position was developed with citizen input — and the checkpoint meetings assume a function of broader public validation of citizen input previously obtained. Indeed, the combination of citizen involvement ***during the planning stages and public checkpoint meetings at ***the end*** should contribute to the effectiveness of the latter.

***Third,* the public checkpoint must be closely related to the inter-agency coordination effort.**

The information obtained through inter-agency coordination is important to the decision-making process. The public has a right to be informed of other public agency positions on the study. Indeed, the Corps' definition of publics includes other

agencies. Thus, it would appear desirable to bring the inter-agency coordination activities to a focal point near the end of each planning stage and to summarize the results of these activities for public distribution prior to the public checkpoint meetings.

***Fourth,* the above discussion leads to the requirement for three public checkpoint meetings: one at the end of each planning stage.**

Some districts may feel the need to hold another meeting at the beginning of the study — to announce formally what is about to take place. It puts everyone on notice. The problem is that it is generally agreed that these initial meetings fail to produce much useful information. Study announcement and solicitation of information on problems and needs can be more effectively accomplished through other forums (see Chapters II and III).

***Fifth,* successful public checkpoint meetings must be convenient with respect to both time and place for the participants.** In almost all cases they should be held in the evening to insure maximum opportunity to attend. Two meeting sessions (i.e., one in the afternoon, one in the evening) are generally not desirable because they do not enable everyone to hear all points of view. Frequently, daytime sessions are attended by public agency officials, and evening meetings are attended principally by citizens and their organizations. It is important that each hear what the other has to say. Depending on the size of the population and the geographical area, it may be desirable to hold more than one public checkpoint meeting at each stage.

B. General Comments: Development of Public Involvement Programs.

The suggested approach to developing public involvement programs in Corps planning studies relies on several key concepts. ***First,*** although districts may plan somewhat differently, the Corps' planning process is divided into three stages, each of which has a definable output. ***Second,*** public involvement program development can and should be approached on a stage-by-stage basis. ***Third,*** there should be public checkpoints at the end of each stage to provide the planner and the reviewing bodies of the Corps with citizen input as to the adequacy and responsiveness of the planning to date. ***Fourth,*** these three public checkpoints are not in themselves adequate, but are only the culmination of active participation during each planning stage by limited segments of the public. ***Fifth,*** decision-making responsive to public concerns requires the explicit consideration of public inputs before key decisions are made at each stage. This means that binding decisions should be avoided during agency checkpoint conferences. Rather, tentative positions should be developed for presentation at the public checkpoint meetings.

In laying out this approach to the development of public involvement programs, an attempt has been made to describe the public involvement objectives which seem appropriate at each stage, and to describe the information exchange. The foregoing description of the planning process may not be totally accurate for all studies. If some planning studies follow substantially different processes, the basic concepts of public involvement program development described above are valid, whether the planning process involves one or even ten stages. In any situation the planner should try to adapt, expand and refine the proposed approach so that it fully supports the planning process.

The next two chapters discuss both the forums for obtaining input from the public (involvement) and for providing the necessary information to the public to support involvement.

CHAPTER II

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC: OBTAINING CITIZEN INPUT

Public hearings . . public meetings . . . workshops . . . seminars . . . charrettes . . . Delphi panels . . . situation simulation . . . advisory committees . . . task forces. What are the techniques that should be employed to involve the public in Corps planning? This is perhaps the most frequent question asked by people initiating public involvement programs. It's the wrong question. It makes the process seem far more difficult than it is. A lengthy list of techniques, each with a distinctive label, implies a format and set of rules that must be followed. Human communication is not that difficult so long as there are at least two people who want to exchange messages.

In deciding how to open communication with the public, there are two essential questions. *First,* what are my purposes in wanting to communicate? *Second,* what are the ways that would be most comfortable to me and the other participants to achieve those purposes. Clues to answering the first question were provided in Chapter I. Communication purposes for phase one of the study would appear to center around a complete identification of the issues and problems to be addressed. No resolution is sought. In phase three, however, the purposes change significantly. Alternatives are being intensively assessed in terms of their impacts, and conflicts among interests are inevitable. While complete resolution may not be possible, some degree of interest balancing and compromise is. Clues to answering the second question in terms of a district's communication purposes at various points in the study are the subject of this chapter.

Within the context of Corps planning, the many long lists of public involvement techniques can be boiled down to five basic ***forums*** for communication: small meetings, moderate-size meetings, large meetings, advisory group meetings, and citizen surveys. There are, of course, different formats for each forum, but the first decision is the choice of one of these five.

A. Small Meetings

Small meetings may include from 2 to 10 people. Most often, they assume the nature of interviews, used to obtain information. They may be initiated by the District or by citizens or groups. Effective small meetings, or interviews, are usually held between the District and a single interest or organization. Their purpose is to help the Districts to find out about the issues and problems the interviewees want addressed and to obtain information which the planner needs in undertaking the study.

They are most useful in developing the Plan of Study, although they could also be valuable in both preliminary and detailed planning where the planner is trying to understand more fully the position of a particular interest or group.

Small meetings should generally not be employed for dialogue among different interests for two reasons: *first,* their purpose is to obtain information, and conflicts may arise which constrain achievement of that purpose; ***second,*** on most studies, small meetings could not include all the different interests — some people would be left out, and they might feel that decisions were being made without their input.

Whenever small meetings are organized by the district, the planners should have a clear idea of what they want: a set of questions or at least an outline might be prepared covering the desired topic of conversation. The planner should be prepared, however, to talk as well about some of the things that concern the interviewee.

One of the biggest advantages of small meetings with one interest or group is that the planner can give his undivided attention to their concerns. That fact alone conveys to even the most skeptical person that the planner wants to understand and address their comments. Another important advantage is that the small meeting provides an opportunity for "off the record" exploration of controversial issues which may not be manageable in larger public forums.

On the other hand, small meetings are time consuming, for there could be a long list of people to see in different locations, and one such meeting is likely to take several hours. Preparation is therefore required to reduce the list to those key interests or groups that must be interviewed. Inasmuch as small meetings are a part of a broader public involvement program, those persons not participating in small meetings still have the opportunity to become involved in other forums.

An exception to this generalization concerning small meetings is the negotiation sessions which might be held near the end of the planning process, when the objective is to bring contesting interests together for discussion.

B. Moderate-Size Meetings

Moderate-size meetings are for groups of people ranging from 10 to 50. They are to be used when Districts want to encourage dialogue among the participants rather than to just hear and record statements. They are most valuable when issues and problems arise which pose potential conflicts among various interests. Their purpose is not to seek problem or issue resolution, but rather to promote full airing of various points of view so that persons representing a particular interest can better understand the positions of others and so that the Corps can obtain better information in order to balance the interests.

Such meetings must be relatively small, have in attendance representatives of all the principal interests, and be confined to limited agendas compatible with the time available. Depending on the agendas, the number of participants and their time commitments, moderate-size meetings might be held for a few hours, a full day, or even several days.

Size is important, for the larger the meeting, the less opportunity for dialogue and the greater the tendency for participants to make statements. The people in attendance are important, because if some key interest is not represented, its position may not be aired and may later be discounted. The agenda must be manageable; all too often the agendas of moderate-size meetings are too ambitious, with the result that no problem or issue gets a full airing. To keep these meetings small and assure the right participation, Districts should personally invite the key participants and should consider cancelling the meeting if some key participants cannot attend. While such moderate-size meetings should be open to the general public, the agenda should be developed with the view of insuring adequate opportunity for discussion with the invitees. Usually, there should be a provision for open discussion at the end of the meeting to allow for participation by any who attend.

Moderate-size meetings are most appropriate in two study stages: ***development of intermediate plans*** leading up to the second public checkpoint meeting and ***development of final plans*** in preparation for the final checkpoint meeting. Depending on the area under study, the distribution of the population, and the complexity of the study and its problems and issues, Districts may have to hold several moderate-size meetings at each phase. They might be sponsored by either the District or a local community organization, although in most cases it would be useful for them to be moderated by a neutral party respected by all participants. These are low-key, working sessions. While intended to be informal, planners should prepare and follow to the maximum extent possible a set agenda.

Moderate-size meetings are most frequently called workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia and retreats. They shall be referred to here as workshops. Their effectiveness requires a great deal of preparation: determining their purpose, identifying participants, preparing agendas, and developing background material for the participants.

There are many workshop formats, the choice dependent on the purpose of the sessions and what the District wants and needs from the participants. Workshops might, for example:

focus on ***alternative*** solutions, discussing each alternative in succession in either one group or in smaller work sessions.

focus on ***problems and issues.***

focus on ***areas of interest or objectives such*** as flooding, recreation, water supply, environmental protection, industrial concerns, economic growth.

focus on ***impacts*** of various alternatives such as cost, extent of flood damage reduction, fish and wildlife effects, environmental consequences.

Workshops might address all alternatives, problems and issues, areas of interest, or impacts — or they might be limited to only a few because of a study complexity and time limitations. It is important to decide first what is wanted and expected, and then to prepare an agenda which meets those purposes.

Workshops have advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include:

they are one of the most effective ways to promote discussion and dialogue among different interests.

they enable the citizens to meet and talk with the planners actually doing the work, and in the process establish personal contact for later discussions initiated by either the planner or the citizen.

they usually involve people who are sincerely concerned and knowledgeable about the study. People would not commit the time if they were not interested.

They do, however, have disadvantages:

effective workshops involve only a limited number of citizens.

usually one-time meetings, they provide no means for continuing participation by citizens.

while several workshops might be held over the course of a study, participation might change — with the result that new participants have to be fully briefed as to what went on before.

if the geographic area of the study is large, multiple workshops may be required at any point in the study.

These disadvantages do not mean that workshops cannot be effective components of public involvement programs; rather that planners should be aware of their limitations and recognize that workshops, when used, are but one part of a study's public involvement program.

C. Large Meetings.

A large meeting must satisfy several criteria: it should be broadly publicized throughout the study area; it should be open to everyone; it should be held in an easily accessible location and in a facility large enough to accommodate the expected audience; and everyone should be given the opportunity to make a statement.

Large meetings essentially provide a forum most suited for one-way communication. Even though they may extend over a period of several hours, they typically involve large numbers of people and if everyone who desires to is to have the opportunity to speak, there will usually be little opportunity for discussions among participants. Large meetings are most appropriate at each of the three study checkpoints (see Chapter I), where all interested persons are asked to review and make statements on the results of that phase.

There are at least three different formats for large meetings: public meetings held by the Corps, public meetings held by local sponsors, and public conferences.

1. ***Public Meetings held by the Corps.*** The Corps now requires that each study have three public meetings. Public ***meetings*** are distinguished from public ***hearings.*** The latter are usually required by ***law,*** are highly structured and formal, frequently have formal rules regarding testimony, and usually result in an official, reviewable record. Meetings seem more consistent with the Corps ***planning*** processes, which tend to encourage informal participation to clarify the needs and preferences of the participants and to relate these to Corps planning activities. In most situations it is expected that districts will use the public meeting as the "checkpoint" meeting with the public at the conclusion of each study stage. The atmosphere should be one of informality to give confidence to all persons to make their statements. While there are several agendas that might be employed, the following might be useful.

SUGGESTED AGENDA

Brochure or one-page outline of needed information handed to people personally at the door as they enter. This is a summary or refresher of information which was furnished to potential attendees at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

Brief introductions (5 minutes) of key elected and appointed officials.

Brief statement (15 minutes) of the purpose of the meeting, the subject matter, the citizen concerns that were raised in the planning process and how they were addressed, the district's tentative conclusions and recommendations (if any) and why.

Question period (15-30 minutes) to permit people to seek clarification (but not make statements) of the subject matter.

Coffee break (15 minutes) to enable persons to pursue questions, talk with each other.

Presentation of statements (as long as necessary) to enable all persons to speak on the subject matter of the meeting.

Invitation to receive written statements for consideration.

There are three additional considerations in the design of public meetings. ***First,*** who in the District Office should chair them? The options range from the District Engineer to the study manager. At the first two public checkpoint meetings (at the ends of study stages one and two), the choice of meeting chairmanship is largely a function of individual District styles. Some may want the District Engineer to preside over all public meetings; others may feel that the study manager, or the Chief of Planning or Engineering should preside. It is the District's choice. However, at the third public meeting (prior to the formal recommendation of a preferred plan) it would be beneficial for the District Engineer to preside — so that he can hear first hand the comments and positions of the public.

Second, should there be an order of statements from the public? Several citizen organizations have complained that their statements are frequently relegated to the end of the meeting, after public agency officials have spoken . . . and departed. Districts should at least be sensitive to these citizen concerns. A single established order of presentation can convey to citizens a mistaken impression of the importance which districts give to the views of each group. After statements by Congressmen (or their representatives) and the potential local sponsor, districts should consider randomly calling on all other persons who wish to make statements.

Third, how should public statements be recorded? The most common means are stenographic recording of all statements and the publication of a transcript, tape recordings, and note-taking. The transcript is the most accurate recording (tapes may not pick up everything; note-taking relies on the interpretation of the person taking notes). However, stenographic recording and the transcript have certain limitations: they are costly; production of the actual transcript may take several weeks (thus reducing their value as inputs to decision-making) and they may convey a too formal atmosphere — too much like a public hearing. Verbatim transcripts are undoubtedly necessary for the third public meeting, prior to the District Engineer's statement of findings and recommendation of a plan. However, Districts should consider, for the earlier public meetings, a combination of note-taking by at least two District planners (so that they can compare notes) and tape recordings which can be referred to if some notes are incomplete. This will enable planners to consider immediately the statements made at these meetings.

2. ***Public Meetings held by local sponsors.*** In studies where potential local sponsorship is clear, and the affected study area is primarily in one political jurisdiction, there may be considerable value to having the local sponsor hold the checkpoint public meetings — as either a part of its normal board or council meetings or as a specially called meeting. The local sponsor must agree to a particular plan and provide the necessary assurances of local cooperation, and constituent needs and preferences are valuable inputs to the sponsor's decision.

Such local sponsor-held meetings would tend to confirm the Corps study role as that of helping local people solve their water resources problems. A local sponsor public meeting could follow the agenda described above for Corps-held meetings, although it may be more difficult for the District to dictate the organization and agenda for a meeting that it does not chair. Usually, there will be more flexibility in specially called meetings, and these are preferred for most studies.

3. ***Public conferences.*** On studies of relatively small areas with small populations and limited problem complexity, some checkpoint meetings (particularly the first two) might follow an even more informal format permitting discussion among participants. Such public conferences might be for anticipated audiences of less than 50 (see description of moderate-size meetings above), or they might even include larger numbers if the issues do not seem complex or particularly controversial. Using this format, Districts might obtain better public input by encouraging participants, sitting around tables, to discuss findings and conclusions rather than just make statements.

The above three formats may not be the only ones for large meetings to be held in conjunction with study checkpoints. Districts are encouraged to select *any* format which will lead to satisfying the purposes of large meetings, is comfortable to the participants, and meets the required criteria: broad publicity, an adequate facility in an accessible location, open to everyone, and all given the opportunity to speak.

D. *Advisory Group Meetings*

Citizen committees are popular forums for public involvement in a number of public planning programs. They can be useful forums in water resources planning activities if the situation calls for, and the District desires, regular and continuing interaction with a set group of citizen representatives over a period of time. Their use must be carefully planned: What are to be their objectives? What are to be their roles? How are the members to be selected?

1. ***Objectives.*** **Citizen committees in Corps planning processes normally have one of three objectives:**

a. ***Interest advocacy to the Corps.*** In the early 70's several Districts established citizen environmental advisory committees to work with the District to assure the full consideration of environmental issues in Corps planning, design and construction. They met periodically with the District Engineer to discuss matters of mutual concern, and they reviewed and commented on environmental impact statements. To many study managers, they represented the "environmental" public interest. While not specifically study oriented, they had an interest in all studies. Presumably, similar District-wide committees could be established for other interests such as flood control, recreation, economic and social concerns. When related to individual planning studies, however, interest advocacy committees have two drawbacks: ***one,*** they don't facilitate interaction ***among*** interests, and ***two,*** they usually do not include in their membership ***local*** representatives of interests who are most concerned about a particular study.

b. ***Contributions to specific studies.*** Study-oriented committees are established to work with the planner in all aspects of the study over its entire course. With representatives from all the key interests in the study area, these citizen committees are the most common.

c. ***Assist with resolution of specific issues.*** Issue-oriented committees are frequently called task forces or study groups. They intensively examine all sides of a controversial issue or problem raised in the planning process. Their membership normally includes representatives from all interests affected by the issues. They are normally dissolved once their examination has been completed.

For the purposes of this manual, the discussion of citizen committees below refers only to study and issue-oriented committees.

2. ***Roles.*** In Corps planning activities most citizen committees are advisory only. They usually make no binding decisions. Moreover, it should be carefully discussed and agreed upon in advance as to whether the committees will be expected to make formal recommendations or whether they are only to be forums for dialogue. Assigning a recommendation function to citizen committees has problems. ***First,*** soliciting recommendations carries with it an obligation to give them serious consideration and problems can arise when the District cannot for some reason adopt the recommendations. ***Second,*** some citizens may not wish to join a committee in which they will be asked to vote with people who have different points of view. They may not want to accept a vote which adversely affects their interest -- and therefore not willing to take the risk of committee membership.

a. ***Study-oriented committees.*** There are several roles possible:

(1) ***offer technical advice*** . . . professionals in the study area grouped to assist the planning team with the collection, analysis and interpretation of information. Frequently, technical advisory committees are organized around particular subjects such as agriculture, industry, environment, etc. They meet periodically over the course of the study. While primarily working with the District planning team, they might also be useful as resource committees to the broader public at large and moderate-size meetings.

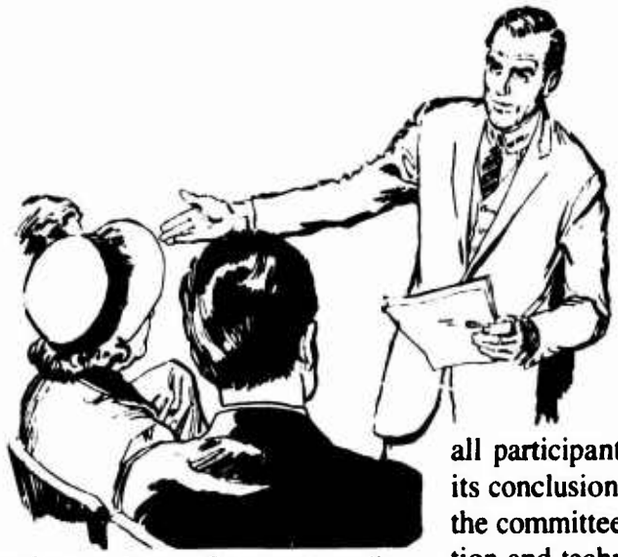
(2) ***facilitate communication and involvement*** . . representatives of various community interests who would become either channels and conduits of information between the planner and the citizens whom the committee members represent, and/or who would actually assist the District with the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of public involvement programs. They might help identify publics, collect information, advise on the best ways to reach the public, or in certain cases conduct meetings.

(3) ***assist in planning*** . . . representatives of various community interests who would become, to the planning team, a "sounding board" — expressing views concerning desirable future conditions, suggesting possible solutions to problems, identifying types of impacts to be considered because of their significance to various segments of the public, evaluating final plans and indicating desirable and undesirable trade-offs.

In a sense, technical advisory committees are different from the other two. The decision to form them should be primarily based on an assessment of District staff capabilities in specific technical areas and knowledge of the study area. Such committees might be valuable as advisors to the broader public in study areas where the Corps objectivity has been questioned.

The use of citizen committees to facilitate communication does, on the surface, have certain advantages. They immediately expand the base of participation. They involve citizens in the design and implementation of public involvement programs — people who know what kind of participation works in the community. But, they may also have disadvantages. Members may not always pass on information. At times they may find it difficult to separate their individual views from those of the people they are supposed to represent. The District may not be able to undertake the sometimes ambitious public involvement programs designed by citizens. Citizen involvement in the conduct of meetings could be an unnecessary buffer between the planner and the citizen.

Planning assistance committees do provide the continuing point of contact for the planner with a group of people who are growing in their knowledge of the study and each other throughout the planning process. If they become the principal forum for interest group involvement, however, they might be too limiting. Only a few people can participate. Membership may or may not be truly representative of community views — a situation that may change over time. Member interest may be different at different points in the study. Indeed, it may be too much to expect a committee of volunteer citizens to sustain their interest over the course of a normal planning study. There are too many slack periods in a normal Corps study when technical activities are being pursued. When related to the three study stages (plan of study, intermediate planning, detailed planning), citizen planning assistance committees may be most effective in the third phase, when the issues, alternatives and impacts are becoming clearly defined. By this time, principal spokesmen for various interests will probably have emerged, making committee selection a relatively easy task. There may be no need to form such a committee at the beginning of a study.



b. ***Issue-oriented committees.*** On some studies, issues and problems may arise (normally in the detailed planning phase) which produce major conflicts among different interest groups — conflicts which threaten to affect study progress. Normally they center around an alternative solution which is feasible, supported by the local sponsor, but strongly opposed by some other interests. Task forces with members from both the supporters and the opposition have been useful in identifying the conflicting issues, articulating the various points of view, and discussing (or arguing) them. Frequently they can quickly establish their areas of agreement and work on the disputed areas.

Issue-oriented committees are perhaps the most volatile of all forums for public involvement. People are likely to be emotional. Committees can be counter-productive forums for personal attack and emotional tirades, or they can be productive opportunities for negotiation and conflict resolution. If they are to be the latter, they must be carefully planned. Representatives from all sides of the issue must agree to participate. If one key interest group does not, this forum probably should be cancelled. Participants must agree to focus on the issues rather than personalities, and the moderator (preferably a mutually respected neutral party) must rigorously enforce this rule. The District must clearly state, at the outset, what it expects from this committee such as an articulation of the issues, or recommendations, that the committee may have to meet several times, and all participants should agree to see it through to its conclusion. The District must agree to support the committee's work with all requested information and technical assistance.

3. ***Selection of Participants.*** This may be the most difficult issue to resolve in deciding to use the committee forum: who? how are they selected? how many?

a. ***Who.*** With respect to technical advisory committees, the choice is rather simple: respected professionals with credentials in the topic areas who have no conflict of interest with respect to the study. Membership on other types of committees is a more difficult problem. Members might be representatives of organizations or just representatives of interests, who may or may not be organizationally affiliated (e.g., an environmentalist, a farmer, a businessman, etc.). The first task is to define the ***interests*** that should be represented such as agriculture, local industry and commerce, recreation, environmental and conservation concerns, civic concerns, downstream interests, or local government interests.

The second task is to determine whether there might now be an existing citizen committee in the study area which generally represents these interests. If there is, and it is willing to participate, then it would seem inappropriate and perhaps counter-productive to set up another committee.

If there is no such committee, or it is not willing to participate, then the third task is to determine whether organizational representatives or individuals are wanted. The answer to this depends on what is wanted. Organizational representatives afford the opportunity for communication through

the representatives with other members, although this does not always occur. Some representatives may take such a charge seriously; others may not. In addition, if people feel that they are representing their organization, they may be reluctant to participate fully in committee meetings if they are unsure about an organizational position. Individual representatives are not bound by such constraints, but it is difficult to know whether their positions are in fact representative of a particular interest — unless other forums for involvement are used as well.

b. ***How are they selected?*** There are several acceptable methods:

(1) ***district selection*** . . . either direct individual selection and invitation or selection of the organization, which in turn picks its representative.

(2) ***neutral group selection*** . . . the District identifies a local community organization with no apparent study position, tells it the interests it wants represented, and asks it to select the members.

(3) ***individual selection*** . . . the District identifies a well-known, respected local citizen, tells him the interests that should be represented, and asks him to select the members and possibly chair the committee.

(4) ***local sponsor selection*** . . . the local government entity likely to sponsor any resultant project selects the members based on representative interests mutually agreed upon by the District and the sponsor.

While District selection may carry with it certain prestige, it has drawbacks. The resultant committee might be viewed as working for the Corps. In many areas, the District may not know who the principal organizations and individuals are — increasing the risk of selecting perons who are not fully representative of their interests. Both problems can be avoided by using one of the three other methods. Local sponsor selection has one strong advantage: if the local government selects the committee members, it is likely to listen to them and be kept better informed about study progress. One possible disadvantage is that some local sponsors might want to appoint members who are known to favor the sponsor's position (if it has one). In practice, however, this disadvantage is largely overcome by the Corps' identification of interests that must be represented.

c. ***How many?*** The question is critical, because large committees don't function well. Ten to fifteen persons is probably best, small enough to permit dialogue, large enough to avoid the problems caused by a few absences. If a larger committee is necessary, then the group should consider electing an executive committee.

E. *Citizen Surveys*

On particularly complex studies, or in areas where the general public seems well informed about water resource problems and issues, it may be useful to conduct citizen surveys to put into perspective the needs and preferences expressed by study participants. Formats include opinion and attitude surveys and questionnaires, and questionnaires designed to elicit specific factual information from affected publics. Such surveys can be conducted by face-to-face interview, by phone, by mail, or even using television and newspapers to present information, ask questions, and invite the submittal of ballots that are provided.

Citizen surveys are not forums for public involvement per se, because they provide no opportunity for interaction. The validity of answers is often difficult to determine, for there is no way to judge the adequacy of the knowledge and information of the respondent. Thus, in the context of Corps planning, citizen surveys have one major purpose: to put the comments of study participants into perspective. Survey research (the discipline of citizen surveys) is expensive and complicated. A successful survey depends on the selection of the sample to be interviewed, the formulation of the questions, the interview itself and the selection and training of the interviewers. It should be done only by skilled and experienced persons in survey research and usually requires the services of an outside organization.

Despite their limitations it appears that surveys can be useful to obtain certain kinds of information:

* general public identification and priority arraying of problems and issues (during the Plan of Study Stage).
* general public attitudes towards the relative importance of impacts of alternative solutions (during the detailed planning stage).
* facts on flood damages, recreational use and similar matters.

In deciding whether to use citizen surveys on a particular study, there are four key steps. ***First,*** determine what the District wants to achieve through citizen surveys. ***Second,*** determine how the information obtained from the survey will be used. While seemingly an elementary step, many surveys turn out to be a waste of time and resources because the user had not determined how the results were to affect the planning process. ***Third,*** investigate recent surveys in the study area to find out whether the results might satisfy the District's purposes. Random surveys are undertaken periodically by a variety of organizations, and they may have recently collected information which is suitable for District purposes. ***Fourth,*** contact reputable survey research firms to discuss District needs. In some localities, organizations conduct regular surveys on public attitudes about a variety of issues, and it is often possible to get them to develop and add questions as part of their regular surveys at nominal cost. They may have already resolved the issues of sample selection, the interview itself and the selection and training of the interviewers.

If Districts are interested in more information about the techniques of citizen surveys they should consult the bibliography in this manual. Attention is called to the requirement for prior OCE and OMB approval of any questionnaires which are subject to the Federal Reports Act.[6]

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This chapter has focused on the primary forums for public involvement that most Districts, on most studies, are likely to consider and utilize. It is not intended to downplay the many useful techniques of citizen involvement that are defined and described in many publications listed in the bibliography. Indeed, in some specific situations, these techniques could be highly effective formats within the large meeting, moderate-size meeting, small meeting, advisory group meeting or opinion sampling forums. Some Districts are using them now in specific situations. Their effectiveness has not been determined. Moreover, no District is employing them on every study. Thus, it was considered more useful for this chapter to discuss the normal options that most Districts are likely to consider.

CHAPTER III

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC: INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Most presentations of potential techniques for public involvement categorize them in terms of those which are most useful for involvement (i.e., two-way communication and dialogue) and those which should be used for information and education (called one-way communication). While a valid distinction, the categorization tends to obscure the relationship between the information component and the involvement component of a program, with the result that public information and education is erroneously equated with involvement. What often happens is that either agencies describe their public involvement efforts primarily in terms of how they are informing and educating the public or unbalanced programs result — good informational materials are provided with little opportunity for public involvement in the use of those materials.

Public information and education, when related to Corps planning studies, has one major purpose: ***to facilitate and support the public involvement effort.*** Thus, the development of an effective information and education program is dependent on a fairly clear idea of the intended timing and nature of the proposed public involvement effort. This facilitative and supportive program role does not in any way minimize the importance of information and education: they are essential components of public involvement efforts.

A. Concepts for Effective Public Information Programs.

There are three discrete purposes for public information and education in support of public involvement programs:

(1) to generate general public awareness of the study and to solicit participation.

(2) to provide specific information to both the actively participating and non-participating publics.

(3) to announce and publicize significant study milestones such as study initiation, planning checkpoints and, of course, the recommendation of a final plan.

Each purpose is pursued at each planning stage.

Once the public involvement program for each planning stage is defined, public information and education programs should be designed to support them. There are three factors to consider:

(1) ***the audience*** . . . who is the information for — the general public? specific groups, or individuals?

(2) ***the content*** . . . what is the information to be conveyed — general descriptive material on the study? specific information on alternatives? announcement of involvement activities?

(3) ***the medium*** . . . what is an effective method to convey the message to the intended audience — newsletters? brochures? letters? phone calls? public notices?

If one combines these three factors with the nature of the public involvement program itself and one of the three purposes for public information, the design of a public information and education program becomes manageable. the public in-

volvement effort leads to the selection of the most appropriate purpose, the purpose largely defines the audience; the audience leads to the content; and the content limits the choice of effective media. Guidance in making each of these choices is discussed in Section B in relation to the three planning stages. Considerations in the selection of the most appropriate information media are discussed in Section C.

B. Public Information, Public Involvement and the Stages of Planning.

Public information programs are discussed here in terms of study initiation, during each planning stage, and at the end of each planning stage.

1. ***Study initiation.*** The purpose of public information at this point is to generate general public awareness of the study and to solicit participation. The primary audience is the general public in the study area. The content at this point is general and relatively limited: description of the study area, the problems to be studied, and how people can become involved. Information media include:

* press conferences.
* news releases.
* mailings to people in the study area on the district's mailing list.
* display advertisements in area newspapers.
* reporter briefings
* public notices.
* public service announcements.

2. ***Public information during each planning stage.***

a. ***The Plan of Study.*** The purpose of public information is to provide specific information to the actively participating publics. The audience is composed of selected persons or groups from key interests. The content is the District's current perceptions of the problems, issues, concerns, political, economic and social setting, etc. Normally, there is only one medium: statements made in person although a brief one-page hand-out might be distributed to supplement the personal statements.

b. ***The development of intermediate plans.*** The purpose of public information is to provide specific information to the participating publics. The audience is representative of interested or affected interests. The content is a description of each alternative and its implications in terms of major concerns raised, the trade-offs and compromises that are possible among alternatives, who will benefit and how, what might be done to mitigate adverse effects, and a presentation of key Corps planning criteria. Information media include:

* public brochures (e.g., Seattle District) and workbooks.
* information fact sheets.
* field trips and site visits.
* newsletters.

c. ***The development of final plans.*** The purpose of public information is to provide specific information to the participating publics. The audience is composed of representatives of interested or affected publics. The content is a relatively detailed description of each alternative solution under active consideration in terms of the impacts on the various interests — impacts which are quantifiable and those which can only be qualitatively described. This information must be related as closely as possible to the interests affected. Information media include:

* public brochures and workbooks.
* information fact sheets.
* field trips and site visits.
* information sessions with specific interest groups to clarify information.
* newsletters.

3. ***Public information at the end of each planning stage.*** Prior to the completion of each planning stage the purposes of public information are

to generate general public awareness of and to solicit participation in the public checkpoint meetings, and to provide specific information to the actively participating publics.

a. ***Generating public awareness.*** The primary audience is the general public — to encourage greater participation. The content is a ***summary*** of the results of the study to date, the citizen input and how it was considered, the tentative district position, and an announcement of the public checkpoint meeting. Information media include:

* press conferences.
* a news release.
* mailings to people in the study area on the district's mailing list.
* reporter briefings.
* public displays.
* information brochures.
* notice that more detailed information is available in accessible locations.
* appearances on radio and television programs.
* speeches before civic groups.

b. ***Providing specific information to actively participating publics.*** The primary audience is people who have participated with the Corps during the planning stage — people who have a greater understanding of what is going on and can absorb more detailed and more technical information. The content is a relatively detailed statement of the results to date, the citizen input and how it was considered, the tentative District position and how it was developed, and an announcement of the public checkpoint meeting. Information media include:

* direct mailings of the statement, such as a draft plan of study during the first stage of planning, to the people who have participated.
* information sessions with interest groups who want to discuss the statement prior to the meeting in order to have points clarified.

C. Considerations in the Selection of Public Information Media.

In many situations, some of the most innovative techniques for public involvement have been used to inform and educate the general public about a study: e.g., the "Water Week" traveling display of the Kansas City District.

> The "Water Week" traveling display included a slide presentation and other graphic displays. The display was set up at regional shopping centers and Corps representatives were present to hand out informational brochures and answer questions. It was developed by the Kansas City District in connection with the Kansas City Region Urban Study.

UPDATE, a monthly leadership report on the St. Louis Metro Water Resource Study.

> ***UPDATE*** is a monthly newsletter published by the St. Louis District, Corps of Engineers, which is distributed to approximately 700 key individuals, agencies, and organizations for the purpose of keeping them informed concerning significant study developments.

The Seattle public brochure.

> For discussion of the Seattle public brochure see, H. L. Sargent, Jr., "Fishbowl Planning Immerses Pacific Northwest Citizens in Corps Projects", ***Civil Engineering,*** Vol. 42, No. 9, September 1972.

Effective public information is critical. Care must be taken, however, in the selection of public information media. **In many areas, the public is**

overwhelmed by information: news releases, announcements, notices, brochures, pamphlets, etc. Under these circumstances the most concerned citizens may have difficulty absorbing what they receive through the mail or are exposed to. Many times the principal difficulty is drawing the attention of the public to a study.

Public notices printed in the classified ad section do not, as a rule, attract the kind of attention that is needed. Paid advertisements in news sections of newspapers attract much more attention. News releases may be largely ignored by the media because of the many releases which the media receives from many public agencies. If districts sparingly use news releases for only the most significant events, there is greater likelihood that stories will result. Appearances of District personnel on public interest radio and television programs, usually on Saturday or Sunday morning, attract small audiences. Slick multi-color study brochures which describe studies in general terms have questionable value. They probably have little effect on increasing mass public awareness, and they are much too general to increase the understanding of active participants. Often, speeches before civic organizations occur more because the organization needs a noon-time speaker than because the members are interested in the study. While they may have value in terms of the Corps' image, they probably have little effect on individual studies. For each one of these generallizations, of course, there are exceptions. The point is that districts should be aware in making their selections, of the limitations of certain information media.

For the past several years, planners have been continually advised to make information materials simple and understandable to the non-professional. The advice is wise. It is recognized that, in practice, the simplification of highly complicated and technical material is difficult. Almost every "absolute" statement must be qualified in terms of incomplete information. The translation of technical material into information understood by the non-water resource professional requires skill, acquired over many trial and error situations. One approach is to use the non-engineer or planner to write the information. Public Affairs Officers or qualified persons outside the District are writer-candidates. Their effectiveness in information translation, however, is dependent on their spending many hours with the planner to understand the issues. It is not merely a task of taking a piece of technical information and reducing it to layperson's language. Another approach is for the planner to test written material on a layperson, perhaps someone who has participated. This is one task which could be performed effectively by a citizen's committee. Such a process is, over time, likely to result in easily understandable information and the improvement of the planner's communication skills

The timing of information distribution is critical. Many citizens complain that they often have only a few hours or days to absorb information which was months in the preparation. Announcements of and invitations to public involvement forums should usually be 30 days in advance with reminders sent out just prior to the activity. Specific information for active participants should be distributed at least ten days in advance of the forum at which it will be discussed — longer if the information is particularly complex.

Many information media have been mentioned but not described in this chapter. Descriptions seemed unnecessary because the concept of each mechanism seemed self-explanatory. Throughout the Corps, Districts have experimented with almost all of them.

CHAPTER IV

DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

What is effectiveness?

A common way of looking at effectiveness is to play "the numbers game" — the number of people on a mailing list, the number of people who attended meetings, the number of responses received to a questionnaire. The numbers game has two problems. ***First,*** there aren't any numerical standards. Fifty people at a meeting may be better than 10, but is 50 adequate? Besides, "counting people" invariably leads to comparisons with the number of people in the area — and involvement may appear miniscule. ***Second,*** the numbers game ignores the ***quality*** of the involvement. Ten well-informed, interested, key citizens may be better than 50 less well-informed or interested.

Another way of looking at effectiveness is to focus directly on the results of the interaction betweeen the planners and the public: Is the information being obtained useful? Are all the critical issues being surfaced? Are there indications that the planning job is meeting with general acceptance? Are there "surprises" at the public checkpoint meetings? Within the context of Corps planning, this concept of evaluating effectiveness seems preferable. While it is subjective and doesn't necessarily help the planner to determine which program elements may be working and which may not, the approach does help insure the integration of public involvement into the overall planning process. Moreover, most experienced planners have little difficulty deciding whether certain forums or techniques are working.

Monitoring and evaluation of public involvement program effectiveness should be an integral part of the planning and decision-making processes. The approach suggested in this chapter relies on several factors. ***First,*** the public checkpoint meetings are the major opportunities for testing the effectiveness of the public involvement activities which have been conducted ***during*** each planning stage. ***Second,*** the agency checkpoint conferences are the focal points for the internal evaluation of the planning effort, including the public involvement program. ***Third,*** the participating publics themselves are important evaluators. ***Fourth,*** certain techniques can be built into a public involvement program to facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

A. Public Chekpoint Meetings.

The approach to the development of public involvement programs which was presented in Chapter I builds into planning the basic ingredient for monitoring not only the public involvement effort but also the planning process itself. Indeed, the purpose of the checkpoint meeting is to determine the extent to which the general public is satisfied with the results of the planning activities, which probably have been conducted with a limited segment of the public (participating publics). Three public checkpoint meetings also provide the planner with the opportunity to get a feel for knowledge levels of the various segments and thus, indirectly, the effectiveness of the companion public information effort. These meetings permit the planner to assess the agreement between views of the general public and those of the participating publics and thus become some indicator of the representativeness of the latter — recognizing, of course, that some meetings could be stacked in favor of some interests. The value of

the checkpoint meetings in directly evaluating the public involvement effort can be increased through the use of such techniques as simple questionnaires distributed and collected at the meetings.

B. The Checkpoint Conferences.

Checkpoint conferences are critical elements of the Corps' internal intensive management program. One of their stated purposes is to review the adequacy of the public involvement effort to date. To be effective within the public involvement approach proposed in this manual, however, the timing of the conference is critical. The timing of the public checkpoint meetings and the Corps' internal checkpoint conferences should be closely coordinated so that public comments can become an effective input to the discussion and evaluation of study progress which occurs at the checkpoint conferences.

The effectiveness of Corps evaluation during checkpoint conferences can be enhanced if certain requirements are established regarding information which the District should prepare on the public involvement aspects of a study. Suggested topics for consideration include:

* a description of the public which has been identified to date including both the general informational audience and the participating publics.
* a summary of the results of the public involvement activities to date and how public comments have been addressed in arriving at the District's tentative position.
* a statement of issues raised by the public which have not or cannot be resolved.
* the planning team's evaluation of the adequacy of the public involvement effort in terms of its providing the information necessary for planning.
* the proposed public involvement program for the next stage of planning, including the new definition of the participating publics and the changes to be made in the forums for participation.
* public involvement discussions during checkpoint conferences should not be confined to descriptions of activities conducted to date, including the public information materials prepared and disseminated, the numbers and locations of meetings held, etc. However, this type information should be summarized and furnished as background material prior to the conferences.

C. The Role of the Public in Monitoring and Evaluation.

The public can play an active role in monitoring and evaluation. Indeed, it must do so — because while the planner has his own information needs, the participating citizens must also be satisfied. In Chapter II it was mentioned that one role of citizen committees is to help the planner develop and manage a public involvement program. Such a committee has continuity over a period of time, is organized to represent certain interests, and is small enough to focus indepth on certain issues. Citizen committees can be effective monitors and evaluators.

The public can be more informally utilized in monitoring and evaluation. During each of the forums established during the active planning in each stage, one part of each meeting could be set aside to explore with the participants the adequacy of the program. These explorations, which need not be time-consuming, could cover such questions as:

* are there other segments of the public that should be included?
* are the forums chosen for participation convenient, comfortable and effective?

* is the information being provided adequate in terms of completeness, timeliness, readability, volume?
* do the citizens feel that they are receiving adequate feedback concerning the influence of their input?

Sometimes the problem of evaluating effectiveness from the citizen's perspective is made too difficult. Frequently, all that is required is to ask.

An indirect form of public evaluation is, of course, articles and editorials in the press. Districts generally don't have to seek out this form of evaluation.

D. Formal Methods for Monitoring and Evaluation.

Although public meetings, agency checkpoint conferences and questions to citizens are the major elements of monitoring and evaluation, there are more formal, systematic techniques which can be employed as more objective validations of the more subjective approaches proposed above. They generally fall into two categories: surveys and media content analysis.

1. ***Surveys.*** It was stated in Chapter II that one of the major purposes of citizen surveys is to validate comments of participating publics. This is, of course, evaluation. The major problems with surveys for this purpose relates to the difficulty of obtaining representative survey results. If surveys are to be used for evaluation, they should be limited to those situations in which the objective is to try to determine such things as the effectiveness of the general public information program and to test the planner's perceptions of the significant problems and issues which must be addressed.

2. ***Media content analysis.*** Throughout a study, newspaper articles and editorials could be clipped. They should be analyzed in preparation for the checkpoint conferences to determine the major issues that have been raised by the media, differing perceptions toward problems, needs and alternative plans, indications of misunderstandings, and discussions of public issues in areas other than water resources which might affect the study. The goal is to try to determine where the study stands in the public view as reflected by the news media.

A successful program for monitoring the news media requires, among other things, a systematic method for reviewing and clipping. Most districts subscribe to many newspapers and do clip articles. Frequently, items clipped are those which specifically mention the Corps. By way of contrast, news clipping programs which are designed to provide information concerning a specific study frequently result in substantially more information than does the regular news clipping service — information valuable to the planner in understanding the study area, its people and how they view the study. It should be noted that a newspaper clipping program is likely to be an incomplete indicator as many people obtain much of their information from the electronic media (radio and TV) which is difficult to monitor.

E. Special Evaluation Needs.

There are two situations in which the monitoring and evaluation approach described in the foregoing is inadequate. First, there may be situations when there is general agreement that the public involvement program is going poorly but the planners are having difficulty in determining precisely what is wrong and what corrective action is appropriate. In these cases, experienced public involvement specialists may be able to provide

valuable assistance in diagnosing the problems and suggesting ways to make the program more effective. The use of outside resources is discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

A second example is when a district is experimenting with a new forum or technique for involvement and wants to assess the extent to which it might have broader applicability. In these situations a more formal, systematic evaluation and documentation might be appropriate in order to make this experience available to other districts throughout the Corps. Normally, such evaluations should be conducted with the assistance of public involvement specialists and closely coordinated with Division or Washington levels.

CHAPTER V

ORGANIZING AND BUDGETING FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A. *Organization.*

1. *The Study Manager as Public Involvement Manager.*

Each study manager must be responsible for the design, implementation and management of the study's public involvement program if it is truly going to be an integral part of the planning process. The study manager must determine the setting for public involvement, be the principal Corps contact with the public, and assure that citizen input is considered. There are several reasons why the study manager must have control over the program. ***First,*** the study manager is the only individual who, at all times, understands the entire study; where it is, the problems encountered, how they are being resolved. ***Second,*** if public involvement is orchestrated from some other point in the district, it becomes far more difficult for citizen comments to be fully considered. Opportunities for public input could easily become "out-of-sync" with where the study is at any point in time, or the opportunities and resultant public input could either exceed the study manager's ability to absorb them or not be in a useful form. ***Third,*** all public groups need access to one individual in the district, someone they will come to know, trust, and be assured that their comments will get full hearing. If different public groups are talking with different district personnel, it becomes much more difficult to balance equitably the needs and preferences of different interests. However, this should not in any way be interpreted as limiting the rights of members of the public to obtain audiences with the District Engineer or other members of his staff.

Particularly on major studies which are likely to generate significant and diverse public interest, care must be taken to assign study managers who have the district management's confidence to deal effectively with the public.

2. *Other People Resources.*

Obviously, study managers cannot implement public involvement programs alone, just as they cannot undertake the technical aspects of the study by themselves. They can draw upon many personnel resources both within and outside the agency.

a. ***Top District Management.*** District managers are key participants in public involvement, for they must make the basic planning decisions. Clearly they are the definers and interpreters of policy, and all such matters should be referred to them. They are the principal monitors and evaluators of program effectiveness. Having approved the initial public involvement program objectives, plans and budgets, they will hold the study manager accountable for the program and direct changes of emphasis when needed. They are the people who can help with access to critical participants and remove bottlenecks in the planning process which might constrain the district's ability to meet its commitments to the public. Occasionally, because of the importance of particular events, such as public meetings prior to major decisions, they must take the lead in presenting Corps information to the public.

b. ***Public Involvement Specialists.*** In large districts with many studies and strong public interest in most, study managers could be effectively supported by specialists who could perform the time-consuming but essential functions of identifying and maintaining lists of publics (both the general public and special interest groups), editing information to be distributed, assuring that schedules for notice and information distribution are met, and arranging for sessions with the public. Performing these functions for a variety of study managers, such a specialist would eventually be-

come a valuable communication link among study managers in public involvement — knowing what type of information results in the greatest interest, what public groups appear to be more interested, etc.

c. ***The Public Affairs Officer (PAO).***

The District PAO represents a valuable resource to the study manager — particularly in contacts with the media to inform and educate the mass public — and must become a major participant in the study. To participate effectively, they must be provided with necessary staff and other resources. The PAO and the study manager must clearly define and agree upon the roles to be played by each. This requires that they sit down early in the process and decide upon the methods that will be used to inform and educate the mass public during each stage of the study and to establish schedules and coordination mechanisms which facilitate PAO involvement in the implementation of the public involvement program.

d. ***Other District Personnel.*** Public involvement directly affects the work of other district personnel involved in a study such as hydrologists, environmental specialists, and economists. The study manager will hear public comments which should be considered in their work. Similarly, as these personnel perform their study tasks, they will often identify issues which might be expected to stimulate public interest. The study manager must develop regular communication channels among study participants to assure this information flow. One method, of course, is the study team concept, where all major participants have a say in the conduct of the study. This is most useful on large studies such as the urban studies, in which most of the study team members are likely to be concentrating primarily on that one study. The study team concept becomes more difficult on smaller studies, when the key personnel are working on their part of the study at different times. It is difficult to get someone to focus on a key issue raised by the public when that individual is currently working on an entirely different problem.

In the latter case, the burden is squarely on the study manager. When other district personnel begin to work on the study, the study manager must discuss with them the public comments likely to affect a particular area of investigation and how their work can be oriented to address those comments. They should be informed of the general nature of the public invovement program and the issues that citizens seem to be concerned about so that their work can be sensitive to these concerns and the study manager can be alerted to potential significant effects in these areas of concern. Most importantly, as the study moves into the detailed planning phase, the study manager must assure that the various alternatives will be fully assessed in light of the impacts which people in the planning area consider to be significant.

e. ***Outside Resources.*** Many districts have begun to utilize private organizations, particularly consultants, to support their public involvement efforts. Success has been mixed, and the following guidelines are offered to help districts most effectively use outside organizations.

First, other organizations should not be normally employed to design and implement public participation programs unless those organizations are

also responsible for undertaking other aspects of the study. The reason stems from the need to have the study managers the key figure in public involvement. If they are not, it is highly likely that public involvement will not become an integral part of the planning process.

Second, outside organizations can be effectively employed to undertake specific public involvement tasks when the district does not have either the required skills or the time. Examples include:

identifying publics — particularly when a district is studying a new area, its personnel would have to spend considerable time finding out about the political, economic and social setting and who the principal participants are. An organization in the area (either a consultant or a public interest group) has the knowledge, or at least knows where the information can be readily obtained. For relatively little money, the district could draw upon this knowledge and obtain a comprehensive list of key participants.

informing and educating the mass public — few districts have the full staff capability to translate technical data into popular language and communicate it to the general public. In many areas they don't have the knowledge of or consistent contacts with key media. While the PAO may frequently have the capability, knowledge and contacts, his other duties may prevent him from timely involvement. Every area has public relations and other organizations that could be effectively used for information translation and dissemination.

implementing certain involvement techniques — occasionally the district may want to obtain citizen input using a method which requires specialized skills. Surveys are one example. The validity of survey results depends greatly on the selection of the people to be interviewed and the wording of the questions to be asked — skills which survey research organizations have. Conferences among people from diverse groups may be another example. At times, the conference may be so important, and the issues so critical that the conference must be designed in such a way as to facilitate and ensure dialogue on the subject. There are organizations skilled in conference design and management. Another example: at times the district may find it desirable to request a community organization to host or sponsor a meeting — particularly on controversial issues where people perceive the Corps to have "taken sides" (whether accurate or not). A respected, "neutral" community organization can be effective in playing a facilitative role and in orienting the discussion around the issues rather than personalities or organizations.

monitoring and evaluation — while in most circumstances public involvement monitoring and evaluation can and should be done in-house, it could occasionally be useful to have an outside, fresh point of view. For example, if nothing seems to be going right, and the district has tried everything, an outside evaluation could provide valuable assistance. Sometimes a person experienced in a wide variety of public involvement programs can, merely by looking at the situation for a few days and talking with a number of participants, make some suggestions or ask some questions that would lead to more effective programs.

B. Budgeting.

1. ***Guidelines.*** Money is, of course, one of the severe constraints on public involvement. Personnel, publications, advertising, surveys, mailings, movies, facility and equipment rental all cost money. What percentage of the total study budget should be allocated to public involvement? There isn't any simple answer to the question. Some districts report spending as much as 25 percent of their study budgets on public involvement;

others spend less than 5 percent. The mere ***fact*** of public involvement budgeting, reasonable intent of what the district is trying to accomplish through public information and involvement, is almost as important as the amount. Having a budget means that it will be more difficult to shift money to other purposes — at least the decision will be conscious. There are a few guidelines which can be offered. ***First,*** smaller studies are likely to require a greater ***percentage*** of the study budget for public involvement budget than are larger studies. The reason is that there are certain public involvement tasks common to all studies — assessing the setting, identifying publics, preparing and disseminating information, holding checkpoint public meetings. ***Second,*** study budgets should be broken down by major study stages, and sufficient resources should be reserved for the latter stages when public interest is likely to be highest. ***Third,*** districts should have public involvement budget categories against which time and expenses can be charged. This would tend to make explicit the trade-offs between, for example, expensive publications, such as brochures, and meetings. Frequently, disproportionate resources are expended for public information activities because they usually come earlier in a study when involvement activities are limited.

Beyond these general guidelines, there are a number of factors to be considered in determining "how much":

(1) the relative difficulty expected in translating and transmitting information about the study to the public — the more complex the study, the more effort needed.

(2) the type of public involvement desired — generally, the greater the number of informal meetings with small groups of people, the more staff time required. However, larger and fewer meetings require much more information preparation and dissemination.

(3) the duration of the study.

(4) the dimensions of the project area and the distribution of the population likely to be affected or interested.

(5) the cultural homogeneity or diversity of the population, e.g., language, ethnic groupings, occupations.

(6) the degree of local awareness and support or opposition concerning the study by the population and various levels of government.

(7) the degree to which citizens of the area are organized. For example, coalitions of organizations of like interests provide more ready access to those interests than if one had to contact each organization individually.

(8) the competence, coverage and costs of the mass media available to reach the population under consideration.[7]

2. ***Costs of Typical Elements.*** Beyond general guidelines on developing public involvement budgets, it would be useful to have actual data on such things as the cost to produce a newsletter, to prepare and print a brochure, to organize and conduct a workshop, etc. However, since the cost of these and other program elements depend to such a great extent on a large number of variables, it is usually only possible to provide a cost range which may be so wide as to be of little value to the planner.

To make cost data useful, it is necessary to provide descriptive information concerning the conditions

under which a particular technique was used. In cases of public informational materials, such as newsletters, brochures, or slide presentations, it would also be desirable to have either detailed descriptions including numbers of pages, use of photographs, etc., or preferably a sample of the product.

Within a particular district, it would be desirable for the planning staff to begin to keep records of cost and results for use in future studies. In the interim, it would be possible to initiate a centralized collection and organization of this type information for dissemination to all Corps field offices. This effort, while desirable, was considered to be beyond the scope of this manual.

C. Public Involvement and Study Schedules. A final note is in order concerning the need to maintain a certain degree of flexibility in study schedules and budgets in order to facilitate effective public involvement. As most field planners, who have faced inflexible study deadlines on the one hand and an interested active public on the other, know well, there is a continuing tension between public involvement programs and study schedules and budgets. Frequently, study milestones can only be met at the expense of the public involvement program. This results, in large measure, from the very real difficulty of maintaining an overly rigid public involvement schedule which was established at the outset of the study. The planner does not always have complete control over such things as meeting dates. If local interests request that a key meeting be deferred for good reason, a planner usually must agree. If this meeting happens to be one of the public checkpoint meetings, the completion of one stage of planning and the initiation of the next may be delayed. Situations may arise when it is obvious, as a result of the public comments at a checkpoint meeting, that more work needs to be done before moving ahead with a particular phase of a study. If planning is to be responsive to citizen comments, the planner will frequently find it necessary to back up and restudy certain issues. On the other hand, study schedules are not to be lightly dismissed. There is little value, to either the planner or the public, of a study which drags on interminably. The problem is to reach a balance between the need for a decisive planning process and an open, flexible, public involvement program.

It is felt that the framework for public involvement, presented in this manual, provides an opportunity to achieve this balance. Developing a program by stages and focusing the involvement activities on the decisions which are to be made at the end of each stage provides a series of checkpoints at which adjustments can be made to both the public involvement program and the study schedule and budget. The achievement of this balance, however, will require the support and understanding of the management elements of the Corps — a recognition and acceptance of the fact that study schedules and budgets which are developed during the early stages of planning may well have to be modified as planning progresses. In many cases, this will be direct evidence that, in fact, public involvement is working.

APPENDIX I

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONTINUING AUTHORITIES PROGRAM

The strategy for the development of public involvement programs, which was presented in the preceding chapters, is oriented toward feasibility studies conducted under the Level C Survey Program. While it is felt that the public involvement principles are applicable to any Corps' planning situation, the nature of the planning task in the Continuing Authorities Program is sufficiently different that public involvement programs developed for these studies will also be different. The following discussion focuses on these differences as they relate to the development of public involvement programs.

The continuing authorities program refers to those studies which are undertaken in response to seven legislative authorities under which the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, is authorized to plan, design, and construct certain types of water resources improvements without specific Congressional authorization. Although there is essentially no difference in the Corps' objectives for involving and informing the public for studies and projects under this program than for projects planned and constructed under specific Congressional authority, the limited time frame, budget, scope, and complexity of these studies introduces differing requirements and constraints into the process of public involvement program development.

1. ***Factors Affecting Public Involvement in the Continuing Authorities Program.*** There are a number of factors which should be taken into consideration in developing a public involvement program for a "typical" continuing authorities study. These factors and their influence on the scope, intensity and character of public involvement programs are briefly discussed below.

a. ***Time Frame for Studies.*** Generally studies conducted under the continuing authorities program take place over a much shorter period of time than do Congressionally authorized studies. For example, on studies conducted under Sections 205, 107, 103, and 111 Authorities, the completion-time objective for the period between initiation of the reconnaissance study to submission of the Detailed Project Report is targeted for 18 months. This compares roughly to a 36 month period for survey reports. This shorter time frame means that the planner does not have as much time available for providing information to the participating publics and for interacting with the public. The study must move at a faster pace, and decisions made in a timely manner. The short time frame generally works to minimize the scope and intensity of public involvement activities.

b. ***Study Scope and Complexity.*** Offsetting the time constraint, to some extent, is the fact that continuing authorities studies are usually limited in terms of the number of problems that can be addressed under a particular program authority and the feasible range of alternative solutions will normally be somewhat limited. The geographical area involved in a continuing authorities study is usually also less than for most Congressionally authorized studies. All of these factors tend to make the implementation of public involvement programs somewhat easier than on larger, more complex studies. Specifically, the task of identifying and establishing contact with the public should be simpler; it should be easier to organize and conduct the public forums; and the non-Corps decision-making process is usually less complex—particularly in cases where most or all of the study is located in one political jurisdiction.

c. ***Study Coordination.*** Another major difference between continuing authorities studies and Congressionally authorized studies is that more of the decision-making authority has been shifted from OCE to the Division Offices. In terms of public involvement, this should serve to reduce the time re-

quired for normal intra-agency coordination and allow the planner to respond more quickly and more confidently to public comments and views.

2. ***The Planning Process.*** The planning process for the Continuing Authorities Program is accomplished in three stages, as is the planning process for Congressionally Authorized studies. However, there is not direct comparability between the stages for these two types of studies. A brief comparison of the planning stages follows:

a. ***Stage 1 - Reconnaissance.*** This stage is roughly comparable to the Plan of Study stage for Congressionally authorized studies. The basic purpose of a reconnaissance study is to develop sufficient information on the nature of the problem, the available solutions, the Federal interest, and the local support for initiating a feasibility study.

b. ***Stage 2 - Plan Formulation.*** During this stage a full range of alternatives are developed, assessed, screened and a recommended plan is selected. This stage includes basically the same planning tasks as are specified for other type studies and requires several iterations of each task with increasing levels of detail in the assessment and evaluation as planning progresses to plan selection. The result of the plan formulation stage is the selection of a plan for detailed project design or a decision to terminate further study.

c. ***Stage 3 - Development of Recommended Plan.*** This stage corresponds generally with Phase II AE&D for projects specifically authorized by Congress. It involves the design of the selected plan to the extent necessary to proceed directly from the Detailed Project Report to preparation of plans and specifications. As contrasted with Phase II AE&D, however, this stage can be expected to be somewhat more flexible with regard to changes in scope of the selected plan, with accompanying changes in project impacts and evaluation. For this reason there may be a greater need for public involvement throughout this stage than is normal in Phase II AE&D activities.

3. ***Public Checkpoint Meetings.*** ER 1105-2-50 requires that at least one public meeting be held during the feasibility study, but does not specify at what point in the study the meeting should be held.

THE REQUIREMENT FOR ONE MEETING SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TO BE A MINIMUM REQUIREMENT.

Some studies may require two or more meetings—particularly those conducted under the small flood control project authorities.

There are at least three critical points in a continuing authorities study, at which a public checkpoint meeting should be considered:

a. ***During Stage 2 - Plan Formulation.*** During this stage a full range of alternatives are initially considered and then screened to allow for the concentration of study resources on a limited number of the most promising alternatives during the latter phases of the formulation stage. A public checkpoint meeting should be considered at the point when the screening decisions are made.

b. ***End of Stage 2.*** At the end of the second stage, a recommended plan is to be selected. It seems mandatory that a public meeting be held at this point in order to allow the public an opportunity to provide input to this selection process. If on a particular study, fewer than three public checkpoints are considered necessary, this is probably the most critical point for a meeting.

c. ***End of Stage 3 - Development of Recommended Plan.*** During this stage, the selected plan is designed in sufficient detail to allow

approval for construction and the commencement of construction plans and specifications. A final "check" with public seems warranted prior to setting the construction program into motion, particularly if the project design has necessitated changes in scope, location or impacts.

The number and timing of public checkpoint meetings which are required for a particular study depends on several factors including the range of potential solutions to a problem, the extent of public interest in the study, the time frame and budget for a study, and the potential for controversy regarding any possible outcomes of the study. Unfortunately, the only way to properly assess some of these factors is through a public involvement program. Therefore, a decision to hold only one public meeting should not be made during the Reconnaissance Stage. Such a decision should be based on results of public involvment activities conducted during the early phases of Stage 2. Sufficient flexibility should be maintained in study schedules and budgets to allow conducting additional public meetings when the public interest in a study is high.

5. ***General Comments.*** With the exception of the number and timing of public checkpoint meetings, there is no basic difference in the approach to public involvement for the Continuing Authorities studies as compared to the normal survey studies. There will still have to be extensive and time-consuming interaction with representative segments of the public ***during*** the planning stages—particularly on those studies when only one public meeting is held. The methods for involving the public and for providing information to the public do not differ from those discussed in Chapters II and III. There may be a need for a more extensive public information effort, however, due to the faster study pace and thus more rapidly changing study situation.

ONE CAUTION IS IN ORDER

Sometimes there is a tendency to assume that because Continuing Authority studies are scaled down—public involvement effort can also be scaled down. This is not necessarily true. While a study may seem small and relatively uncomplicated from the perspective of the Corps planner, it may be seen as very significant by local citizens. Indeed, since typically the impacts of the problems under consideration and the potential solutions are local, there may be more interest by the general public in a Continuing Authorities study than in a broad comprehensive regional study.

LOCAL CITIZENS WILL NOT BE EASILY CONVINCED THAT THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INVOLVEMENT IN SUCH A STUDY SHOULD BE DIMINISHED SIMPLY BECAUSE THE CORPS DESIRES TO "STREAMLINE" THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR CONTINUING AUTHORITIES STUDIES.

FOOTNOTES

1. Desmond M. Connor, "Public Participation," in ***Environmental Design for Public Projects,*** ed. by D. W. Hendricks, et. al., Water Resources Publications, Ft. Collins, Colorado, 1975, p. 581.
2. Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Engineers, ER 1105-2-800, ***Planning, Public Involvement: General Policies,*** 8 Jan 75, p. 1.
3. Richard M. Males, ***A Prototype Program for Public Involvement,*** A Report Prepared for the Office of Water Resources Research, W. E. Gates and Assoc., Inc., Fairfax, Va., May 1974, p. 2.
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